

## **Breakout Discussions: President's Management Agenda and Citizen-Centered Government**

### **1b. Service First**

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This presentation describes an "*Appreciative Inquiry*" model used in a community-joining pilot test being completed in New Mexico and internationally in cooperation with Mexico and in developing the VCS Strategy. The initial stage of the pilot test was the designing of citizen-centered services, facilities, and events in Mexico and in four communities along the newly designated *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* (ECR) National Historic Trail, a 1,200 mile trail from Mexico City to the San Juan Pueblo, north of Santa Fe, NM, which is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The trail passes through communities that vary drastically in size, make-up, and needs for development, environmental education, cultural preservation, and recreation. The presentation included video segments of community events and an explanation of the participative model.

Urbanization and population growth in the West have intensified public demand for visitor-related public land management efforts. BLM has begun the development of a strategy to reinforce and expand its commitment to the American people and community-based programs and services, while remaining dedicated to stewardship of the public lands. The purpose of the Visitor and Community Service Strategy is to provide a cohesive and coordinated approach to various single-focus programs and reinforce BLM's commitment to recreation, tourism, education, interpretation, law enforcement, the National Landscape Conservation System, and the multitude of BLM programs with valuable socio-economic and environmental benefits. The objectives include the following:

1. Provide vision, guidance, priorities, and purpose for BLM's services/stewardship
2. Articulate roles, improve effectiveness, efficiency, and inter-relationships
3. Promote public understanding and recognition of social and economic benefits of BLM's multiple use mandate, its multi-faceted social programs, and natural resource management
4. Build on foundation and sound concepts of strategic documents and adapt ideas to new challenges facing BLM in the next 20 years and incorporate changes necessary to implement policy, budgets, and operations
5. Provide Congress and external interest groups, partners, and other constituencies with clear picture of Agency role and need for management of human, social, economic, and environmental issues as related to multiple use mandate and sustainable development.

BLM completed an extensive round of interviews with key constituencies from the national to the local level. These meetings suggested four key focus areas for BLM to join with the public to produce more profound and lasting results: providing environmental education and interpretation, cultivating socio-economic benefits, building enduring partnerships, and joining communities in development and implementation. BLM now has to coordinate and engage the communities and constituents to co-create the strategy so it will respond to changing needs and involve all interested parties. The pay-offs can be very high, including the stimulation of business opportunities and jobs, a public better engaged in caring for the incredible resources on the public lands, and a BLM agenda framed through the eyes of citizens. The Visitor and Community Service (VCS) Strategy offers BLM and opportunity to step forward and put Secretary Norton's four Cs (consultation, cooperation, communication, and conservation) into

action serving America's families, communities, and the West.

The purposes of the pilot test and strategy development are to dramatically increase community involvement in planning for the operating concepts for the Trail and improve the quality of planning and community understanding and to optimize community investment in joint partnerships for operating and maintaining the Trail so that the community remains engaged in fostering the Trail and its socio-economic and environmental benefits to the community via commitments to environmental education, involvement in interpretation, involvement in the Board and Friends groups, and in planning for future development, conservation and multiple-use activities. The purposes will be achieved in two ways: include community involvement and input as an integral part of the scoping process for management plans and as a way to explore possibilities and to coordinate activities for public/private lands (the Trail).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a methodology developed by David Cooperrider, a professor of Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University. AI is a method for discovering, understanding and fostering innovation through gathering positive stories, images, and building positive interactions. AI seeks out the best of "what is" to help ignite the collective imagination of "what could be." The AI is a 5-D model which can be a helpful tool in planning efforts requiring strategic vision within empowering contexts for innovation and development. It can bring together those who would otherwise be at odds to move toward a common dream. A brief summary of the process and principles behind A.I. can be found in Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination (Mohr & Watkins, Jossey-Bass, 2001). The five D's of the model -- Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Delivery -- are explained below:

- Definition – Since the first question sets the tone and direction for the rest of the inquiry, a lot of time up front is needed with groups from the community to define the topic in the community's language and to frame the inquiry in a way that seeds the possibilities.
- Discovery – this phase involves engaging the community in conducting the inquiry, starting with paired interviews, where community members discover each other, what their high-point experiences in the community are, what resources they bring to the table, what keeps people in the community, and what the wishes for the community are. Then in table groups the community members begin to synthesize the topics, themes, and core values which emerge from interviews.
- Dream – In the Dream phase, community members work from the foundation of great experience and core values and wishes to develop a dream for how the community might be and translate that into a possibility statement that describes the community *as if* it were operating the way these community members imagine it could be.
- Design – Next, the community members begin to identify stakeholders and helpful mechanisms (i.e. processes, laws, systems, regulations, rules, principles) that will enable the possibility statement to become real. In essence, the community gets engaged in whole system redesign thinking.
- Delivery – Finally the community begins to develop the next steps for realizing the dream

It is clear that for a Trail like ECR to succeed, it has to go far beyond the requirements of the National Historic Trails Act. This does **not** mean that the U.S. Government needs to take all of the actions beyond what is called for in the Act. But rather, NGOs, communities and governments have to join their efforts to develop a complex and enriching system of visitor

experience along the Trail. Great trail experiences can be both of great economic impact to the communities, as well as a transformative experience for visitors. These benefits should be of particular interest to three kinds of government entities at three levels. Specifically, these are land management agencies, economic development and tourism organizations, and parks and recreation agencies, all at the three levels of national, state and county/city governments. The ECR team has been in contact with those interests in the U.S. in a relatively coordinated and systematic way. These contacts have given rise to the current third alternative in the proposed ECR management plan. However, the contacts with Mexico for the required coordination have just begun, although there is a long standing set of relationships with government organizations, at all three levels from national to state to local, in Mexico established by both the NPS and BLM.

Presenters explained the specifics of the Trail community, its diversity and issues, and the coordination with Mexico, and the results of the pilot test community events. Some of the possibility statements from these events were the following:

- Make the train into a living experience accessible to handicapped, bicycles, horseback, walker
- Link communities and community centers along trail with emphasis on education, history, Spanish emphasis
- Develop the trail as a backbone uniting local and regional historic, cultural and community resources
- Long trail theme tying local communities together with events on trail to promote understanding of trail

The AI model is being used to help focus BLM and the public it serves on regional planning, community expansion issues, economic revitalization, sustainable travel, tourism, and other quality of life issues and the role of the community and federal agencies. The resulting comprehensive VCS Strategy will enable the Agency to provide a coordinated and consistent approach to visitor management and visitor services based on community input.